

At a time of unprecedented democratic participation, the actions of the Sinclair Broadcast Group are shameful, in my view illegal and undermine our very democracy.

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is the clearest example yet of the dangers of media consolidation. If they had chosen to air a pro-Bush piece and allowed that to be balanced with a pro-Kerry piece, I would not be writing this complaint. While they are entitled to their personal opinions and even to voice them in aired editorials, it is infuriating that they can use their audience, roughly 1/4 of all Americans, to present their ideology as news. It is unacceptable.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more ideology of who's in charge peddled as news and less actual news, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. They show that Democracy cannot be served by putting capitalist interests before public interests.

Thank you.